

ENROLMENT AND ORIENTATION IN PRESCHOOL AND OCCASIONAL CARE

PRESCHOOL

INITIAL ENQUIRY

Information is requested from parents who are interested in enrolling their child in a service (preschool or occasional care) by phone, email by visiting the centre or through the centre's website. Staff initially provide information about eligibility to both occasional care and preschool. If the initial contact is by phone or email parents are invited to visit the centre. When parents visit they are provided with information about the centre, meet the staff and have the opportunity to look around the centre with a staff member. The child can either go on a waiting list or if eligible to start, the enrolment process can commence and they are given an enrolment form and parent handbook. For initial contacts with parents, the staff document information about the parent/child if enrolment forms are not completed so there is a follow up record. See notes on referrals.

Eligibility: Under DECD processes there are a few rounds of offers. The first round is for children in the local catchment area and the second round is for children in the wider community. Parents are advised of this upon enquiry about the centre.

PROCESS

Interview: All parents have an informal interview about the centre with a staff member, which is an opportunity to ask questions and find out information about the centre.

Parents enrolling for the following year: Orientation sessions are held with parents to talk about the service and support parents with completing enrolment forms if required. This session provides information about the preschool, occasional care, the campus, parenting programs, the parent handbook and important policy information. This is facilitated by the director and at least one other educator and other staff may play a key role such as the community development coordinator.

Those who enrol during the year: Those who do not attend an orientation session are provided with information through the interview process and subsequent visits. All regular staff support parents with the enrolment process in varied ways from time to time. Children do not start at the centre until the orientation process is complete.

Prior visits: Parents come with children for two visits with their child for at least an hour prior to starting the centre. There is room for more visits if a child needs this/parents want this and on the rare occasion there may be less visits at the director's discretion (e.g. if a child is very familiar with the service/routine or the child is in a crisis situations). Staff take time to get to know the parent and child on these visits.

Documentation: Enrolment information includes a range of consents/information, such as visiting Elizabeth Grove Primary School, photograph consents, providing information about a child and payment consents including Centrepay. Parents provide proof of birth, immunisation history, medical information relevant to the child if necessary and any other information from professionals or agencies that are involved with the child. Designated staff may assist parents to fill out enrolment forms if needed.

Information for the child: All parents are provided with a centre parent handbook and in preschool a story book about the preschool is provided so parents read to/talk with their child about, which outlines what will happen in the preschool day.

External Support: If a child is supported by other professionals/agencies there may be a meeting with the family and the external party or when not possible a phone meeting prior to the start date (with the parent's authorisation) to maximise support for the child.

Coming from another early childhood service: Parents are encouraged to provide documented information if they are transitioning from another early childhood service such as another preschool, family day care or child care, so that staff know how to best support the child.

Days of attendance: Staff attempt to have children in two separate groups in preschool over the week but the centre is flexible to parent needs and will work with families who need different days for work/study purposes. In certain situations, the centre also works with families for a gradual increase in enrolment time up to the 15 hours per week, if the parents desire this. If a child has a specific need it may be necessary for a child to access different days in order to have access to support services and to ensure that the curriculum and routines will meet the child's needs.

Ongoing communication: Staff interact with parents of children who are new to the centre daily to let them know how the child is settling. They phone the parent if needed if a child is continually distressed

Support for the child: In the early days of a child's enrolment, staff use the initial written and verbal information about the child (provided by the parent) and other information such as reports to support the child. If the child has been in occasional care on Fridays prior to enrolling in preschool, there is conversation and a documented handover to preschool staff which provides information about each child. If the child has been in occasional care regularly on Thursdays there is no orientation or extra visits provided the enrolment has not stopped.

Referrals: Referrals to department support services for speech pathology, additional support etc. is done in consultation with the department support services, educators, other staff and any other agencies. If the referral is approved by the department there may be an opportunity for additional staff to support a child on a 1-1- basis. A child may not be able to start at the centre until support is in place for additional needs.

GOM: If the child is a Guardian of the Minister, there is usually a meeting with carers and/or the social worker/other professionals prior to the enrolment to assess how to best support the child. There must be a designated person responsible for all fees and charges.

Social events: Parents are encouraged to attend social events or other events at the centre or campus to help them get to know staff and feel a sense of belonging in the centre.

Bi-lingual support: A staff member may support children/families to translate in different languages in order to communicate with the family/child. Family members or cultural community members who speak English also support any parents who do not speak English. In some cases, an interpreting service, bilingual staff at Elizabeth Grove Primary School and department bilingual workers may be accessed to assist staff to communicate with children/families. Children are supported through department bilingual workers on occasions. The Migrant Resource Centre is also accessed on occasions.

Children who live outside the local catchment area: The centre follows department requirements for children living outside the local area of the preschool and parents may be provided with information about another centre closer to their home instead of enrolling the child. When the centre is permitted to enrol children who live outside the local area, the staff will still inform parents of preschools closer to the family home so the parent can make an informed choice.

OCCASIONAL CARE (OC)

Enrolment: Enrolment is ongoing throughout the year. Initial contact is with any staff member and then with the occasional care coordinator.

Eligibility: Priority is given to those in the local catchment area, families in crisis and children whose siblings attend Elizabeth Grove Primary School.

Prior visits: Parents normally engage in two visits with their child for at least an hour prior to starting the centre. They can stay for as long as they like during the session. There is room for more visits if a child needs this/parents want this and also less visits if a child is already familiar with the service or in crisis situations. Staff take time to get to know the parent and child on these visits.

Documentation: Parents have an interview with a staff member and

- complete an enrolment form and other permission forms
- complete information about the child (sleep, eat, toileting etc.)
- provide immunisation information, medical information relevant to the child if necessary and any information from professionals or agencies that are involved with the child. Each day parents of infants provide additional information to support rest, feeding etc.

Support for the child: Staff use the initial information about the child by the parent/carer (and any other information provided) to support the child in the first few weeks until the staff get to know the child.

Ongoing communication/support: Staff connect with parents each session to let them know how the child is settling. The occupational therapist, speech pathologist and family services coordinator are available to support children and families and this is communicated to families who can choose to sign a consent form. The CDC also provides a range of supports for parents. Staff keep parents informed by phone during the session if a child is not settling.

Coming from another early childhood service: Parents are encouraged to provide documented information if they are transitioning from another early childhood service such as family day care or childcare, so that staff know how to best support the child.

Referrals: In OC educators may work with other professionals to support a family with a referral for a child to a community speech pathologist or other service as children under preschool eligibility age are not able to access preschool support services. All referrals must be endorsed by the educator in the room and the director.

Social events: Parents are encouraged to attend social to help them get to know staff and feel a sense of belonging on campus.

Bi-lingual support: In some cases, an interpreting service, bilingual staff at Elizabeth Grove Primary School and DECD bilingual workers may be accessed to assist staff to communicate with children/families.

Withdrawal from the centre

The centre follows department guidelines when a parent withdraws a child from the centre.

The document is to be read in conjunction with the department's 'School and preschool enrolment policy'.

Updated August 2019 To be reviewed as needed

Footnote: The term 'parent' in this document can be substituted for any person who has legal responsibility for caring for the child. Initial contact with the centre is also available through the centre website. If a child is absent for a significant period, a new orientation process may be negotiated with the parent to support the child with re-entry to the centre.

